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DURING 1966-67, THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION, WITH ASSISTANCE FROM THE DANFORTH FOUNDATION, SPONSORED AN EXTENSIVE STUDY OF THE PH.D. IN ENGLISH IN AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES. DON CAMERON ALLEN, THE DIRECTOR, WORKING WITH AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE, USED QUESTIONNAIRES, VISITS, AND CONFERENCES AS BASES FOR A FULL-LENGTH REPORT WHICH INCLUDES THE UNANIMOUS RECOMMENDATIONS LISTED IN THIS ARTICLE. THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERN CAREER ADVISING OF POTENTIAL COLLEGE TEACHERS, FACILITIES NECESSARY FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS, LENGTH OF STUDY, FOREIGN LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS, SIZE OF CLASSES, REQUIRED COURSES AND SUPERVISED TEACHING, THE DOCTORAL EXAMINATION, DISSERTATION REQUIREMENTS, AND INTERIM DEGREES. THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN "PMLA," VOLUME 82, NUMBER 4, SEPTEMBER 1967, PAGES A10-A11. (BN)

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September, 1967

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE PH.D. IN ENGLISH

DURING 1966–67, the Modern Language Association, with financial assistance from the Danforth Foundation, sponsored a study of the Ph.D. in English in American universities. The Director of the Study was Don Cameron Allen, Sir William Osler Professor of English of the Johns Hopkins University. Throughout the Study, Professor Allen worked with an Advisory Committee composed of Theodore Andersson (Chairman and Professor of Romance Languages, University of Texas), Gustave Arlt (President, Council of Graduate Schools in the United States), Fredson Bowers (Chairman and Professor of English, University of Virginia), John C. Gerber (Chairman and Professor of English, University of Iowa), Albert R. Kitzhaber (Professor of English, University of Oregon), Maynard Mack (Chairman and Professor of English, Yale University), Robert Ornstein (Chairman and Professor of English, Western Reserve University), Gordon N. Ray (President, John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation). The Director and Committee met with representatives of almost all departments now offering the Ph.D. in English. Questionnaires were mailed to all of those who received the Ph.D. in English between 1955 and 1965, chairmen of all departments offering the Ph.D. in English, graduate professors of English, and chairmen of a representative sample of English departments not offering the Ph.D. Mr. Allen's full report will be published by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston in the spring of 1968.

The following recommendations are unanimously concurred in by the members of the Advisory Committee on the Ph.D. Study. They are based upon the extensive documentation in the full report. The Committee respectfully submits these recommendations to departments now offering the Ph.D. in English and to those preparing to do so.

I. English Departments, in addition to pursuing their objectives of liberal education for all undergraduate students, should concern themselves with the early identification and career advising of potential college teachers.

   Not all English majors intend to be teachers, certainly not college teachers, but those who do deserve special attention during their undergraduate years.

II. The Ph.D. program in English should be undertaken only where there are adequate faculty, library resources, and study facilities.

   A department might decide to offer the Ph.D. only in some areas; at the end of the M.A. it might arrange the transfer of some students to departments which offered the Ph.D. in the area of their interest. Departments contemplating the introduction of a Ph.D. program should secure competent outside advice.

III. Ph.D. study should be full time study.

   Part time study after the M.A. should be discouraged as inefficient and ineffective. Financial support for Ph.D. students should be provided by the institution, by private foundations, by state and national government, and by the student himself. Supervised teaching (IX below) should be worked in as a regular part of the program.

IV. The Ph.D. in English should require no more than four years of full time study following the B.A.

   Institutions should make it possible for students to remain at the university and devote themselves to full time study during the summer months.

V. A decision regarding the student's acceptability for doctoral study should be made by the Department by the time the M.A. is awarded.

   In the case of transfer students, the decision should be made by the end of the first academic year of residence at the new institution.

VI. A knowledge of one foreign language and its literature at the fourth year college level should be an alternative to the two or three language requirement.

   This recommendation must be recognized as calling, in fact, for a substantial increase in view of the frequent laxity of application of the current language

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requirements. The foreign language requirement need not necessarily be confined to French or German.

VII. After the M.A., most of the Ph.D. student's courses should be seminars and other small classes.

VIII. The Ph.D. student should study language as well as literature.

In this context the study of language means study of the nature of language, the history and structure of English, and the principles of rhetoric.

IX. The Ph.D. student should do a limited amount of supervised teaching as part of his program.

By limited amount is meant no more than one class per term in the second and third years of the program. The teaching should be supervised and should require attention to both composition and literature. Departments should regard teaching as part of the student's education, not as a means of staffing courses.

X. The major doctoral examination should be of reasonable length and need not cover all of English and American literature.

XI. The dissertation should be of such scope that it can be completed within twelve months of full time work. Achieving this end is the responsibility of the supervisor as well as of the candidate.

The student should be able to complete both research and writing in twelve months. He should, however, be encouraged to choose a dissertation subject early, and by the beginning of the fourth year should have completed all other work in the Ph.D. program. The supervisor should cooperate with the student by reading his work promptly and by taking steps to see that he is not delayed if the supervisor has to be away from the university.

XII. The dissertation may be either a monograph or a group of related essays.

XIII. The examination after the dissertation should be abolished.

XIV. An interim degree should be awarded to a student who has completed all requirements except the dissertation.

At the present the Ph.C. (Candidate in Philosophy) and M. Phil. (Master of Philosophy) are being introduced.

XV. The profession should explore the feasibility of systematic post-doctoral work in English.

5 July 1967

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